



## *Senate Press Office*

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **PeachCare and Education Funded**

## **Senate passes 2008 budget**

**ATLANTA** – The State Senate passed its version of the \$20.2 billion Fiscal Year 2008 budget today 53 to 1 – funding *PeachCare for Kids* at its present level and fully funding the state’s education budget, returning nearly \$50 million in previous austerity cuts to local systems. The Senate’s version of the legislation also provides \$50 million to buy or protect environmentally sensitive land, and \$430 million in Homeowner Tax Relief Grants. Differences in the Senate and House versions of the budget now will be worked out in Conference Committee prior to the close of the General Assembly on Friday.

“Although we put this budget together in less than 48 hours – it is a long, arduous process to go through,” Sen. Jack Hill, chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee said today following the vote. “We have spent months working on this budget to ensure that we are doing what is best for Georgia and her residents.

“Because of this work, our colleges and universities will gain critical infrastructure for anticipated growth and we have increased spending on life sciences, research, eminent scholars and libraries. We are taking care of our children through increases in education and health care funding, we have guaranteed that our public defenders and courts are adequately funded and we have provided tax relief to our homeowners.”

“The environment and economic development are funded at efficient levels. Traffic relief is addressed in this budget and tax cuts are included and the bond package is within the limits of our new debt management plan,” said Senator Eric Johnson, the President Pro Tempore of the Georgia Senate. “It balances the competing needs of Georgians.”

“*PeachCare* remains a top priority for us so, under our plan, low income children will maintain access to affordable health insurance,” Senate Majority Leader Tommie Williams said. “We also have given public health nurses a pay increase, and this budget will expand health care information transparency. The Senate’s version also increased the funds to support rural health initiatives.”

## Senate Funding Highlights

PeachCare for Kids	\$81 million
Funding for rural health care	\$5 million
Governor’s Land Conservation Program	\$45 million
<i>Go Fish Georgia</i>	\$19 million
Restored money from DOE austerity cuts in 2003 and 2004 to local school systems	\$50 million
Funded the Governor's new GBI initiatives	\$2.6 million
Fully fund the Gov's initiative to update the Georgia Census	\$1.3 million
Flu Vaccines for high risk residents	\$7 million
E85 grant program	\$500,000
Expand Mercer's existing medical school program in Savannah	\$5.5 million
Morehouse School of Medicine Operating Grant	\$800,000
Increase County Jail Subsidy from \$20 per day to \$30 per day	\$2.8 million
Charter school grants	\$2 million
Ten percent salary increase for National Board Certified Teachers	\$1.3 million
Quality Basic Education Act for Children in Custody	\$4 million
Fund textbooks and instructional materials for the Georgia Academy for the Blind	\$100,000
Public School Employees Retirement System increase rate from \$14 per month to \$14.50 per month	\$2.6 million
Fund Grassroots Arts Program	\$250,000
Funds to raise nurse salaries to 85 percent of the market in all public hospitals	\$3.5 million
Fund suicide prevention activities	\$300,000
Three percent pay increase for all law enforcement that didn't receive the three percent pay increase last year	\$2.9 million
Funds the "Georgia Fire Officer Development Act"	\$750,000
Funds for College of Agriculture at the University of Georgia	\$375,000
Funds for repair and renovation needs at facilities in the Georgia Public Library System	\$2.5 million
Funds for infrastructure at the UGA Griffin Campus	\$1.3 million
Funds for Eminent Scholars at Georgia Southern University and Kennesaw State University	\$1 million
DTAE funds to cover FY07 shortfall	\$1 million
Funds to support the state's airports	\$5 million

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*Sen. Jack Hill serves as Chairman of the Appropriations Committee. He represents the 4<sup>th</sup> Senate District which includes Bulloch, Candler, Effingham, Evans and Treutlen counties and portions of Emanuel and Tattnall counties. He may be reached at 404.656.5038 or via e-mail at [jack.hill@senate.ga.gov](mailto:jack.hill@senate.ga.gov).*